

Rapid, Decisive, or Effective?

The Applicability of Rapid Decisive Operations in the Enforcement of the Bush Doctrine

**A Monograph
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Academic Year 03-04**

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 074-0188

maintaining

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|---|---|--|------------------------------------|
| 1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank) | 2. REPORT DATE | 3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED | |
| 4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Rapid, Decisive, or Effective? The Applicability of Rapid Decisive Operations in the Enforcement of the Bush Doctrine. | | 5. FUNDING NUMBERS | |
| 6. AUTHOR(S) MAJ Douglas A. Ollivant | | | |
| 7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) School of Advanced Military Studies 250 Gibbon Ave. Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027 | | 8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER | |
| 9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027 | | 10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER | |
| 11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES | | | |
| 12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited. | | 12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE A | |
| 13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 Words) See Attached | | | |
| 14. SUBJECT TERMS Bush Doctrine, Rapid Decisive Operations, Joint Operating Concept, transformation | | 15. NUMBER OF PAGES 40 | |
| | | 16. PRICE CODE | |
| 17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT U | 18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE U | 19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT U | 20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT none |

ABSTRACT

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Rapid Decisive Operations has emerged as the primary Joint Warfighting Concept for the Future Force. It anticipates—as its name suggests—leveraging American technological advantages to quickly and utterly overwhelm an opponent. Yet the theory has its roots in the mid-1990s concept of “Shock and Awe,” as popularized by Harlan Ullman. This monograph then questions whether a pre-9/11 concept can fulfill the requirements of what is generally known as the “Bush Doctrine,” the commitment to preemptive war against terrorists and states which sponsor or facilitate them. The monograph first defines the Bush Doctrine, using various Presidential speeches and the National Security Strategy. The Doctrine can be simplified as a commitment to preemptive war against terrorist groups, weak states that facilitate terrorist groups, and rogue states that sponsor terrorist groups. The central chapter of the monograph then defines Rapid Decisive Operations, highlighting its commitment to using asymmetrical effects in a rapid tempo to produce “cybershock,” or the inability to react to American operations and demands. The fourth chapter then uses these four features of Rapid Decisive Operations and examines their utility against each of the three groups mentioned in the Bush Doctrine. The final chapters draws conclusions, and while Rapid Decisive Operations is not judged to be utterly without merit, the concept is found to lack applicability in the areas of warfare most likely to face the United States in coming decades. The monograph concludes by recommending that Joint Forces Command re-examine the assumptions underlying Rapid Decisive Operations and consider designing a new Joint Warfighting Concept from properly validated assumptions.

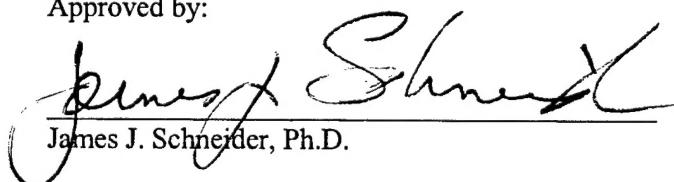
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MONOGRAPH APPROVAL

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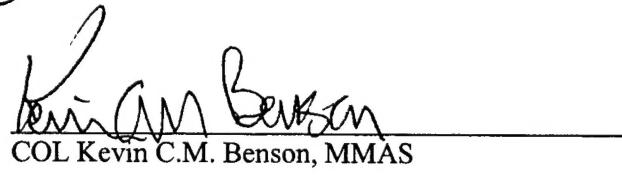
Title of Monograph: Rapid, Decisive, or Effective? The Applicability of Rapid Decisive Operations in Enforcement of the Bush Doctrine

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank many individuals whose guidance and help were essential to the completion of this monograph. I wish to thank my director Doctor James J. Schneider for serving as my primary mentor for this document. Thanks are also due to BG(R) Mike Hall and Mr. Damjan de Krnjevic-Miskovic for proofreading and commenting on various drafts of this monograph. The responsibility for errors of commission and omission remains mine.

The ideas and views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Command General Staff College, the School of Advanced Military Studies, or Department of the Army.

Chapter One: Introduction

As this monograph is being typed, American soldiers are deployed in both Afghanistan and Iraq, attempting to restore (or perhaps, create) order in the wake of successful military campaigns against the Taliban and the Ba'athist regime of Saddam Hussein, respectively. The warfighting campaigns that destroyed these regimes, Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) were wildly successful. Neither regime ever really had any hope of avoiding capitulation.

Both campaigns were seen as exemplifying a “New American Way of War,” characterized by extensive use of precision guided munitions, overwhelming American airpower, and extremely small (in OEF) to relatively small (in OEF) deployments of American ground combat forces. The regimes in both Afghanistan and Iraq were overthrown by American combat power in a relatively short amount of time. Yet American forces remain in each of these countries, with the political future of each unsettled and violent resistance to any American presence (even if carried out by minority factions) still prevalent.

From the vantage point of the mid-1990s this entire picture would be entirely unexpected. The reigning security paradigm of that era was one of “Decisive Force.” Grounded in the Weinberger-Powell doctrine, this informal doctrine sought to overwhelm the enemy with materially overwhelming force, destroying the enemy’s ability to resist. Decisive Force could be seen as the culmination of the “American Way of War.”¹

Yet, just as the ascendancy of this doctrine was being recognized and codified, an alternative doctrine rose to challenge Decisive Force. This new doctrine, referred to as “Rapid

¹ The “American Way of War” (the term is Russell F. Weigley’s) refers to a deep-seated American tendency to see geostrategic situations in the narrowest military sense. This definitional bounding of the problem then lends itself to kinetic, attrition-based solutions. In other words, “the main problem of American strategists was usually that of encompassing the destruction of the enemy’s armed forces.” Quotation from Russell F. Weigley, The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1977), pp. xxi-xxii.

“Dominance” or, more popularly, “Shock and Awe,” recognized that Decisive Force imposed some limitations on American foreign policy. A war utilizing Decisive Force would be expensive, required a large standing military, and therefore tied the hands of policymakers. The authors of the Rapid Dominance concept sought to leverage the technological advantages of the “Revolution in Military Affairs” (RMA) and the dynamics of the “new economy” to fundamentally alter American operational concepts.² This new doctrine would permit wars to be cheaper, in terms of expenditures, lives, and political capital, and therefore seemed more apropos for a more engaged sole superpower.

Doctrine writers at Joint Forces Command (JFCOM) are attempting to encapsulate this “New American Way of War” in a Joint Warfighting Concept.³ Evolving out of the Rapid Dominance paradigm, this new concept promises to maximize American technological advantages, while indulging American preferences for short, cheap, and low-casualty wars. This concept, under the new title of “Rapid Decisive Operations” (RDO) is the primary focus of the JFCOM Joint Futures Lab (J9).

Yet, since this concept was unveiled, the singular event of September 11th has intervened, embroiling American society in a larger global war on terrorism. In the wake of the terrorist attacks of 9-11, President Bush authored a new National Security Strategy. In this document, the President and his staff articulated a new strategic concept, popularly known as the “Bush Doctrine.” While the concept will be covered in greater detail later in this monograph, it states that the United States reserves the right to conduct operations against terrorist networks *and states that harbor them* in a preemptive fashion. The doctrine then put both terrorists and a select group of states “on notice” that military action could occur against them at any time.

² Harlan Ullman and James Wade, Jr. et al, Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance (Washington, D.C.: The Center for Advanced Concepts and Technologies, 1996), pp. 2-10.

³ This concept appears to have replaced “Decisive Force” as the primary contender for the title of “The New American Way of War.” See F.G. Hoffman, Decisive Force: The New American Way of War (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1996) and Ullman and Wade et al, Shock and Awe.

But this doctrine immediately puts a much more political emphasis on American strategy than has been the past norm, raising the question whether any doctrine influenced by the "American Way of War" is up to the challenge. It is then incumbent upon American military strategists to consider: Is the Rapid Decisive Operations framework, the articulation of which predates the Global War on Terror, the proper operational concept for the implementation of the Bush Doctrine?

To answer this question, this monograph proceeds in four steps. Following this Introduction, Chapter Two defines the Bush Doctrine. Chapter Three then examines the tenets of Rapid Decisive Operations. Chapter Four then compares the two concepts, with the intent of discovering the compatibility, or lack thereof, of the Defense Departments primary Joint Warfighting Concept with the requirements of the premiere doctrine of the National Security Strategy. Chapter Five then concludes, and draws recommendations from the study.

This study explicitly and deliberately brackets questions concerning the prudence, morality, legality and wisdom of the Bush Doctrine. Instead, it approaches the doctrine as a mandate from the military's political masters, and examines current warfighting concepts in light of their utility in implementing this doctrine.

Chapter Two: The Bush Doctrine

The Bush Doctrine has become the justificatory strategic doctrine, and is seen as the enabling strategy for American operations in Afghanistan (Operation Enduring Freedom [hereafter OEF]) and Iraq (Operation Iraqi Freedom [hereafter OIF]). In short, the Bush Doctrine is the strategic concept for our current Global War on Terrorism (hereafter GWOT), including the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq linked with the GWOT. It is therefore essential to understand exactly what the Bush Doctrine says, so that military planners can derive the explicit and implicit instructions of the doctrine.

The Bush Doctrine is most authoritatively codified in the National Security Strategy of the United States, and becomes the primary reference in this chapter. However, the doctrine was first outlined in speeches given by the President at the Citadel and the United States Military Academy, and these texts are referenced to provide background and nuance.

The Bush Doctrine contains one fundamental tenet with three applications. In its most succinct form, the Doctrine states that the United States reserves the right to strike preemptively against three different kinds of entities: terrorist groups themselves, weak states unable to control terrorist groups within their borders, and rogue states that harbor or support terrorist groups.⁴ Recent US combat actions give us examples of all three of these entities. Al-Qaeda is certainly the prime example of a terrorist group, while Afghanistan is perhaps the best example of a weak state, and Iraq a typical rogue state.

It is perhaps worth noting that the Bush Doctrine is not entirely novel, and may actually be foreshadowed in the Clinton administration 1998 missile strikes. As Bruce Hoffman notes:

In the 1998 cruise missile raids, however, the US strikes were aimed at neither Afghanistan nor the Sudan itself: instead, the Clinton administration had singled out a private individual, bin Laden, as the Provocation for, and target of,

⁴ The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, September 2002, p. 13-16; Jeffrey Record, "The Bush Doctrine and War with Iraq," Parameters Spring 2003, p. 5.

the missile attacks, evidencing little regard for either the two countries' ruling governments or their international rights as bona fide members of the United Nations.

Further, the US government justified the missile attacks not on retaliatory grounds—as in the Libyan and Iraqi cases—but in terms of the right to self-defence contained in Article 51 of the UN Charter. This was a critical distinction for the United States to have made. For, whereas simple reprisal is not considered a legitimate reason for resort to force in international law, the right to self-defence, under the UN Charter, permits a country legitimately to take military action to preempt an attack that is perceived to be imminent.... Significantly, both military operations were portentously heralded by Secretary of State Madeline Albright as the first blow in ‘the war of the future’, thereby promising further—even continued—American offensive action, as needed. Never before had the US struggle against terrorism been so specifically couched in such terms—no doubt in order to send a powerful deterrent message to bin Laden, his followers, and any countries that might be providing them with sanctuary and support.⁵

The Bush Doctrine is therefore less novel than either its proponents or detractors might care to admit. However, there is no question that in the wake of the September 11th attacks, President Bush certainly gave this doctrine—previously articulated only *sotto voce*—a new prominence and imprimatur.

President Bush first publicly hinted at the direction his security strategy might take in his December 2001 address at The Citadel. In this speech, Bush articulated a vision of “a moral and ideological divide” that separated civilized nations from “bands of murderers, supported by outlaw regimes.” The President then stated that the danger posed by these enemies was not the possibility of their ideology spreading, but instead, “that a few evil men will multiply their murders, and gain the means to kill on a scale equal to their hatred. We know they have this mad intent, and we’re determined to stop them.”

President Bush then laid out what can be seen as a nascent version of the Bush Doctrine:

Our lives, our way of life, and our every hope for the world depend on a single commitment. The authors of mass murder must be defeated and never allowed to gain or use the weapons of mass destruction.

America and our friends will meet this threat with every method at our disposal. We will discover and destroy sleeper cells. We will track terrorist movements,

⁵ Bruce Hoffman, Inside Terrorism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), pp. 209-10.

trace their communications, disrupt their funding, and take their network apart, piece by piece.

Above all, we're acting to end the state sponsorship of terror. Rogue states are clearly the most likely sources of chemical and biological and nuclear [sic] weapons for terrorists. Every nation now knows that we cannot accept—and we will not accept—states that harbor, finance, train or equip the agents of terror. Those nations that violate this principle will be regarded as hostile regimes. They have been warned, they are being watched, and they will be held to account.⁶

In this first speech, we can see the doctrine in its earliest form. Not only are terrorist organizations marked for defeat, but also those nations that harbor and/or assist these groups have become “hostile regimes.” But the threat against these hostile regimes is still implicit—it is not yet clear what it means to say, “they will be held to account.”

Some six months later, during his graduation remarks at The United States Military Academy at West Point in June of 2002, President Bush truly put the international community on notice that the security policy of the United States had significantly shifted. Concisely stating the obvious lesson of September 11th, the President first stated that, “the greatest danger to freedom lies at the perilous crossroads of radicalism and technology.” Based on this fact, he went on to state the new American paradigm:

Deterrence—the promise of massive retaliation against nations—means nothing against shadowy terrorist networks with no nation or citizens to defend. Containment is not possible when unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction can deliver those weapons on missiles or secretly provide them to terrorist allies. We cannot defend America and our friends by hoping for the best. We cannot put our faith in the world of tyrants, who solemnly sign non-proliferations treaties, and then systematically break them. If we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long. Homeland defense and missile defense are part of stronger security, and they're essential priorities for America. Yet the war on terror will not be won on the defensive. We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans, and confront the worst threats before they emerge. In the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action. And this nation will act.⁷

⁶ President George W. Bush, “Remarks by the President at The Citadel, Dec 11, 2001,” accessed at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/12/print/20011211-6.html> (Sep 22, 2003).

⁷ President George W. Bush, “Remarks by the President at 2002 Graduation Exercise of the United States Military Academy, June 1, 2002,” accessed at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/print/20020601-3.html> (Sep 22, 2003)

In this section of the speech, the coming doctrine becomes still more explicit. It is now clear that the United States intends to engage in offensive action against not only the terrorist networks, but also “unbalanced dictators” and “tyrants.” But in the next section, the real novelty of the Bush Doctrine is made clear, as the President claimed that “our security will require all Americans to be forward-looking and resolute, to be ready for preemptive action when necessary to defend our liberty and to defend our lives.” When tied together with the earlier section, it becomes evident that the President is here asserting the intention of the United States to conduct pre-emptive attacks against regimes it perceives to be hostile or tyrannical in order to disrupt terrorist networks, prevent proliferation and use of weapons of mass destruction, and prevent the resourcing of terrorist groups. In other words, since terrorist groups themselves cannot be deterred, the United States will hold states—which can be deterred—responsible for terrorist groups they sponsor.

This brings us to the issuance in September 2002 of The National Security Strategy of the United States (hereafter NSS). Chapter V of this document is entitled, “Prevent our Enemies from Threatening Us, Our Allies, and Our Friends with Weapons of Mass Destruction.” This title is actually fairly descriptive of the contents. In this chapter, the Bush Administration lays out the core of the new strategy. First, “given the goals of rogue states and terrorists, the United States can no longer solely rely on a reactive posture as we have in the past. The inability to deter a potential attacker, the immediacy of today’s threats, and the magnitude of potential harm that could be caused by our adversaries’ choice of weapons, do not permit that option.” In short, the United States must accept the responsibility for intervening in a foreign country—ranging from a rapid attack against a non-governmental network, through a short-term operation in a region outside of government control, through a governmental overthrow in a “rogue” or “weak” state. To again quote from the NSS, “We must adapt the concept of imminent threat to the capabilities and objectives of today’s adversaries.... The United States has long maintained the option of

preemptive actions to counter a sufficient threat to our national security. The greater the threat, the greater is the risk of inaction—and the more compelling the case for taking anticipatory action to defend ourselves, even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy's attack. To forestall or prevent such hostile acts by our adversaries, the United States will, if necessary, act preemptively.”⁸

The Bush doctrine then breaks from historical precedent—or at least the historical precedent of explicit policy statements—and declares a right, and intent, to take preemptive military action if and when the President deems it necessary. But the policy actually has a far greater implication than merely preemption. The fact that the administration views hostile and rogue states as threats to national security, an attack on a nation-state must not only remove the current tyrant or weak government, but must ensure that another weak government or tyrant does not emerge, leaving the country equally available as a base for terrorist networks. This is a much more far-reaching, and demanding, mandate.

So the Bush Doctrine, in making the states that harbor terrorist networks—whether complicitly or through weakness—a security concern of the United States, has put the United States in the business of (at least a particular type of) “nation building,” as a concerted effort must be made in post-conflict operations to ensure that the successor state is both responsible and capable. By building stable states, the United States then enhances its own security. In short, the Bush Doctrine puts the United States firmly into what Nadia Schadlow refers to as “the Art of Governance,” which must then be implemented by “Reluctant Military Governors.”⁹

The necessity of denying sanctuary and resources to terrorist groups may then require a concerted effort by the United States military to reshape the former weak or rogue state. While the short-term feasibility of “democratization” may be contested, at the very least, it will be

⁸ The National Security Strategy of the United States of America (September 2002), The White House, Washington, D.C., pp. 13-16.

⁹ Nadia Schadlow, “War and the Art of Governance,” Parameters XXXIII: 3 (Autumn 2003), pp. 85, 90.

incumbent on the military to install some type of decent, (at least minimally) accountable, constitutional government. This mandate may, and almost certainly will, require both a different skill-set and a radically different mindset than has been traditionally seen as the Army's professional jurisdiction. In Schadlow's reading, this quantum shift will require "an acceptance of political and economic reconstruction as an integral part of war," a need to "rethink those tasks that have traditionally formed the core of the Army profession," a recognition that "replacement of an opposing state's political leadership...is virtually always required a consolidate victory," and an acknowledgment that "military planners [must] consider how combat operations and governance operations should explicitly inform each other, since they are part of the same campaign."¹⁰

In short, the Bush Doctrine has radically changed the mandate facing American military forces for the foreseeable future. It calls into question the adequacy of a force that "fights and wins the nation's wars," or at least complicates the definition of "wins." A new concept is then required in order to fulfill the radically new mandate that the National Security Strategy imposes. Rapid Decisive Operations has been proposed as that concept.

¹⁰ Schadlow, "War and the Art of Governance," pp. 91-93.

Chapter Three: Rapid Decisive Operations

The term “Rapid Decisive Operations” is often used as a kind of transformational shorthand, meaning whatever the user wants it to mean, but it in fact has a definition (albeit one that fails the brevity test). The JFCOM J9 Joint Futures Lab RDO Whitepaper defines the concept as follows:

Rapid Decisive Operations is a concept for future joint operations. It describes the military element of an effects-based campaign against the broader backdrop of all instruments of national power being applied to reach our goals and protect our national interest. A rapid decisive operation will integrate knowledge, command and control, and operations to achieve the desired political and military objectives. In preparing for and conducting a rapid decisive operation, the military acts in concert with and leverages the other instruments of national power to understand and reduce the adversary’s critical capabilities and coherence. The United States and its allies asymmetrically engage the adversary from directions and in dimensions against which he has no effective counter, dictating the terms and tempo of the operation. The adversary, suffering from loss of coherence and operational capabilities and unable to achieve his objectives, ceases actions that are against U.S. interests.¹¹

From this definition, we can distill four key concepts. First, RDO has the characteristics of being effects-based, knowledge-centric, intrinsically joint, and fully networked. For the purposes of this monograph, all four of these characteristics will be grouped under the heading of “effects based,” as the concept of effects based operations assumes a networked, knowledge centric, joint environment.¹² Second, it is asymmetric; attacking in ways the enemy cannot counter. Third, RDO seeks to induce “cybershock,” causing “loss of coherence,” and effectively paralyzing the enemy, rather than attriting the enemy through either annihilation or exhaustion.¹³ Finally, as implied by the name of the concept itself, all these events occur rapidly, through

¹¹ “Towards a Joint Warfighting Concept: Rapid Decisive Operations.” RDO Whitepaper Version 2.0, U.S. Joint Forces Command J9 Joint Futures Lab. 18 July 2002. p. viii.

¹² See Edward A. Smith, Effects Based Operations: Applying Network Centric Warfare in Peace, Crisis, and War (Washington, D.C: DoD Command and Control Research Program, 2002), pp. 61-97

¹³ ¹⁴ James J. Schneider, “A New Form of Warfare.” Military Review (January-February 2000), pp. 56-61; James J. Schneider, “Black Lights: Chaos, Complexity, and the Promise of Information Warfare,” Joint Forces Quarterly (Spring 1997), pp. 21-29.

increasingly agile military power. Though these principles are inter-related, each concept must be examined in turn.

Effects-based

The concept of Effects Based Operations (hereafter EBO) is based on the concept of a society as a complex, adaptive system. Drawing on complexity theory and biology, it—correctly—notes that contemporary societies are no longer composed of separate spheres, but instead interdependent parts. Therefore, traditional military actions, which impact only a single aspect of the system, are likely to be ineffective, as the system can compensate and adjust to a one-dimensional attack. The system can divert resources from other areas, create alternative means to accomplish the same end, and generally redirect the energies of society around the affected part of the system.¹⁴

EBO takes this systematic nature into account, and with the assumed information dominance, targets and attacks key “nodes” that disrupt both the intended target as well as anything with the capability to reinforce or compensate. Rather than attacking a system on its perimeter, EBO instead seeks to attack—keeping with biological analogies—the circulatory and/or nervous systems of the organism, keeping the system from countering the attack and preventing effective reinforcement of the targeted sub-system.

However, this explanation is perhaps insufficient or at least outdated, as the partisans of EBO do not see the concept as working primarily in the physical world (though certain of its actions must take place there), but instead seek to impact the “cognitive domain, the area in which

¹⁴ On systems theory, see Ervin Laszlo, The Systems View of the World: A Holistic Vision for Our Time (Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press, 1996). On EBO’s reliance on systems theory, see Smith, Effects Based Operations, p. 26, “The non-linearity of the relationship between means and will also points to the utility of considering all conflict as clashes between complex adaptive systems.” See also Antulio J. Echevarria II on the flawed assumption that the enemy is a “system of systems” in “Rapid Decisive Operations: An Assumptions-Based Critique,” Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute, November 2001, pp. 8-9. Available online at <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/ssi/pubs/2001/rapid/rapid.pdf>.

the non-linear psychological effects that we seek to create and exploit actually reside.”¹⁵ The intent is then not to disrupt a key node of production (German ball-bearings being the classical example), but rather to induce certain psychological effects that shape the behavior of a targeted state—Army, Government and People. As the RDO Whitepaper notes, EBO seeks to enact “the physical or behavioral disruption of the enemy’s war-fighting systems through precision strikes directed against key system and inter-system nodes to generate cascading effects throughout the systems attacked.”¹⁶ To accomplish this task requires, as its proponents acknowledge, “understand[ing] something of the cognitive process involved in observing and responding to a stimuli.”¹⁷

RDO then relies on EBO to create an “effect” that, based on predictive analysis, shapes the behavior of a targeted state. RDO, though EBO, then aims to change state behavior with a minimum of violence, changing the decision-making calculus of the state leadership or, alternatively, making the continued leadership of the current regime untenable. In the end, this leaves the enemy regime unable to exercise his “critical capabilities” and without political “coherence.” The enemy is therefore defeated by being plunged in chaos, after carefully chosen “effects” have removed his ability to act. As put in the RDO Whitepaper, this then “[creates] effects—desired enemy actions reactions, or inabilities to act—that force the enemy to comply with our objectives.”¹⁸

Asymmetrical

RDO also prides itself of being “asymmetrical.” In their Strategic Studies monograph on the subject, Steven Metz and Douglas V. Johnson II define asymmetric as “the use of some

¹⁵ Smith, Effects Based Operations, p. 152.

¹⁶ RDI Whitepaper, p. 14.

¹⁷ Smith, Effects Based Operations, p. 157.

¹⁸ RDO Whitepaper, pp. vi, 9.

difference to gain an advantage over an adversary.”¹⁹ The intent is to, as the RDO Whitepaper suggests, attack one’s enemy in a manner or direction that is unexpected, thereby gaining a decisive advantage, protecting one’s own vulnerabilities, and retaining the initiative. Metz and Johnson further state that asymmetries come in numerous forms: asymmetries of method, of technology, of will, of organization, of patience and normative (or legal/ethical) asymmetries.²⁰

The RDO Whitepaper does not specify which of these particular asymmetries it intends to achieve. However, from the context of the document, it appears clear that will, patience, and legal/ethical asymmetries are not being brought to the forefront. Therefore, we will assume that RDO seeks to maximize asymmetries of method, of organization, and, most of all, of technology. The concept then relies on the products of Western modernity—techniques of production, methods of operating, and manners of organizing.

Given the American strategic posture, it seems clear that discussions of asymmetry almost always involve technological superiority. While RDO may seek to become an asymmetric tool in and of itself (an asymmetry of method), its internal asymmetric aspect will rely on technological advantages that permit precision engagement and information superiority. In fact, it seems a reasonable assumption that “asymmetry” in the document is in a fact a shorthand expression for information-driven precision engagement.²¹

¹⁹ Steven Metz and Douglas V. Johnson II, “Asymmetry and U.S. Military Strategy: Definition, Background and Strategic Concepts.” Strategic Studies Institute Monograph, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. January 2001, p. 1.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 10-12.

²¹ This is almost certainly the intent of the “fully networked, knowledge-centric” tenets of RDO. See RDO Whitepaper, pp. 7-8.

Cybershock

The final aspect of RDO is the “loss of coherence” often known as “cybershock.”²² The term is taken from James J. Schneider’s seminal article, “A New Form of Warfare.”²³ In this piece, Schneider maintains (uncontroversially) that in post-Industrial societies, including their military sub-societies, information has achieved primacy as the critical resource. Information—its gathering, processing, packaging and distribution—has become the micro-level engine that drives not only military organizations, but also the political organizations that control them.²⁴

Cybershock recognizes the “velocity” of information in these systems as a vulnerability, and seeks to disrupt the flow of information, therefore causing system paralysis. In Schneider’s description:

The complexification of the world created a new kind of vulnerability that Cybershock has since sought to exploit, a vulnerability to system paralysis. The actions of all complex systems are controlled and modulated by the reliable free flow of information and energy. Cybershock in warfare causes paralysis by attacking the enemy’s nervous system in the same way that maneuver causes exhaustion by defeating the opponent’s metabolic system—his logistics.²⁵

This strategic paralysis, or loss of cohesion, then prevents the enemy from effectively responding to even the most traditional forms of attack, leaving his entire military system vulnerable to exploitation. The attacks deprive the enemy system of the new energy provided by information, thereby increasing the entropy in the system, eventually bringing it to a chaotic state, if communication and information are not restored. The chaotic state, deprived of effective governance and defense, is therefore rendered supine. With the enemy in this condition, the United States can easily impose its will with a minimum of traditional military force on the ground. It is through this means that RDO intends to be “decisive.”

²² While the term “cybershock” does not appear in the RDO Whitepaper, the term “loss of coherence,” coupled with James Schneider’s influence of two decades of SAMS graduates, can only refer to this concept.

²³ Schneider, “A New Form of Warfare.”

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 58-59. Information is also the driving force, and therefore the vulnerability, of financial, media, and most other modern institutions as well.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 59-60.

Rapid Tempo

Finally, to be worthy of the name, RDO must be—well—rapid. As the RDO Whitepaper itself clearly states, “The rapid application of our integrated capabilities, aimed more precisely in an effects-based campaign, will enhance our ability to rapidly collapse enemy warmaking and warfighting capabilities, achieving a decisive outcome sooner.”²⁶ The document also provides a listing of enablers for a rapid force, which include knowledge, a compressed decision process, and—most critically—tailored (read: smaller) forces and sustainment.²⁷

This last point is perhaps the most important one in the concept. The authors of the RDO concept recognize that speed is inversely proportional to mass. Therefore, they seek to enhance speed by decreasing the size of the force to be employed. “Rapidity, both absolute and relative, is enhanced when we have the ability to use knowledge to reduce mass, thereby increasing rapidity of movement by identifying and deploying the right capabilities needed to achieve the desired effects instead of all the capabilities we might need to meet an unspecified range of actions.”²⁸ RDO assumes—indeed, is hinged on—the assumption that superior intelligence will reduce friction and uncertainty, obviate the need for redundant capabilities, and permit smaller force packages. These smaller force packages are rapidly deployable, thereby actualizing the “rapid” aspect of RDO. These forces then both minimize the strategic air and sea lift requirement, and also maintain enhanced tactical mobility once placed in theater, as smaller forces are almost by definition more nimble.

²⁶ RDO Whitepaper, p. 10.

²⁷ “Rapid force development relies on both improved deployment processes and enhanced transportation capabilities to deploy and employ a tailored force that requires less logistic sustainment.” RDO Whitepaper, p. 15.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 11.

Conclusion

RDO then relies on four key concepts—effect based operations, asymmetry, cybershock, and rapid tempo. Taken in concert, the RDO ideal becomes clearer—it seeks to attack in an asymmetric manner using advanced technology—thereby reducing the size of the force committed—in a rapid manner to disrupt the enemy system. The goal of the RDO system is to reduce the enemy's system to a state of chaos, leaving him unable to exercise command and control over any aspect of the nation-state apparatus. Once the system is reduced to chaos, the enemy system can be systematically dismantled, or strategic capabilities removed, using a much smaller force that is now protected by the enemy's disability, as well as overwhelming information dominance. While the end result, the defeat of the enemy in detail, is fully compatible with all “American Ways of War,” the means used to reach this end are faster, cheaper, and more precise. The concept promises decisive battle in a much “cleaner” fashion.

The RDO concept is, on its face, an attractive one. It promises to engage the enemy more precisely, removing key nodes while minimizing civilian casualties. By reducing the physical mass of military force, it reduces manpower requirements, thereby cutting costs. Further, the lighter, more maneuverable forces can be deployed at a much lower cost in time, resources, and—most importantly—political capital. But is the RDO concept suited for the removal and transformation of terrorist safe havens that is demanded by the Bush Doctrine? To this end, the two concepts must be compared.

Chapter Four: Means and Ends

Having laid out the principles of both the Bush Doctrine and Rapid Decisive Operations in chapters two and three, respectively, this chapter compares the two concepts. This chapter will attempt to answer the research question of this monograph—Is Rapid Decisive Operations the correct operational concept with which to pursue the Bush Doctrine? To this end, this chapter will examine the suitability of RDO when faced with each of the threats enumerated in the Bush Doctrine—terrorist networks, weak states, and rogue states.

RDO v. terrorists

Terrorist networks promise to be a, if not the, primary focus of American military power for the foreseeable future. How applicable is RDO to this emergent threat? Is it capable of engaging groups like Al-Qaeda?

First, Effects-based operations will be difficult to utilize against terrorist networks, at least in a strict military sense. While the terrorist network will likely have critical vulnerabilities at various “nodes,” these nodes are far more likely to be a financier, an extremist educational institution, or a collection of cellular telephones, rather than a more traditional military target. So while the theory of EBO is applicable to terrorist networks, it is not clear that military implementation of EBO will be possible. These critical nodes must instead be targeted by other elements of national power, or by various police forces. This is not to say that an occasional element of a terrorist network’s “nervous system” may not be a military target, but we should expect military power to be a supporting effort in a larger EBO campaign against terror.

Also, as our recent experiences have indicated, gathering intelligence for use against a terrorist network may make an effect-based campaign difficult. While the U.S. military establishment has considerable electronic, signal, and space-based intelligence assets, the human

intelligence necessary for a War on Terror is widely acknowledged to be deficient.²⁹ Without a clear understanding of the nature of an opposing system, attempting to create effects within that system is almost impossible. Precision munitions, by definition, require a known location to which to be precisely delivered. Absent clear information superiority, there can be no significant effects, let alone decisive ones.

Instead, this monograph suggests that the military effort against terrorist networks will become attrition-based. Military power will be used against terrorist “trigger-pullers” when and where they can be identified in a manner and location that lends itself to military action. The fleeting nature of these targets will require that they be attacked immediately with whatever asset is available. It is then optimistic to think that these military actions will be anything other than reactionary, attacking individuals or small cells that have left their sanctuaries to conduct operations. The transitory exposure time will prevent the detailed information dominance required to produce an effects-based attack. Instead, when a cell surfaces or is detected, operations carried out against that cell will be attrition-based.

Likewise, it is difficult to picture US military attacks on terrorists being “asymmetrical” in the usual sense. While US forces will plan and execute “asymmetrical” attacks on terrorists, these will either be of the “traditional” counter-terrorist nature (raids by special operatives), or technologically advantaged attacks in the mold of the attack on Qaed Sinan Harithi in Yemen.³⁰ Yet even the nature of this latter attack, with the CIA, and not the military, as the lead agency, indicates that the military function in the War on Terror will likely not be an asymmetrical one, save perhaps in the older sense of engaging in raids and ambushes to gain the “asymmetric”

²⁹ See, e.g. Thomas E. Ricks, “Intelligence Problems in Iraq are Detailed,” Washington Post October 25, 2003, p. A01.

³⁰ Qaed Sinan Harathi, a senior al-Qaeda operative, was killed in Yemen when a Hellfire missile fired by a CIA-run Predator UAV destroyed his vehicle in early November of 2002. See Greg Miller and Josh Meyer, “CIA Missile in Yemen Kills 6 Terror Suspects,” New York Times, November 5, 2002. Accessed online at <http://www.latimes.com/la-fg-yemen05nov05,0,6993799,print.story>, November 20, 2003.

advantage of surprise. Further, one could say that any application of conventional military power is “asymmetrical” to a terrorist organization.

Nor will the concept of “cybershock” be of particular utility for the military aspect of the War against Terror. The terrorist, not being part of a state apparatus, will utilize civilian facilities and networks for his command and control—most notably cell phones and the Internet, as well as low-tech means such as civilian messengers and word of mouth. Since this civilian infrastructure cannot be directly attacked, it is difficult to strip away command and control in this manner. There may be an opportunity to disrupt the command and control of a terrorist network through the removal of key leaders, but this is an entirely different concept, and military participation in such operations will be more reminiscent of attrition warfare. It is not that we do not desire to disrupt terrorist networks, but merely that it is only possible to do so through the engagement of key leaders. However, given the semi-chaotic loose network system typical of terrorist organizations, even the attrition of key leaders may have little effect in the short- to medium-term.

Finally, rapid tempo is in some ways antithetical and in some ways absolutely vital to the war against terror. Given that members of terrorist groups live and hide among civilian communities, finding these individual promises to be a “long, hard slog.” There is nothing rapid about sifting through large communities, of which Americans know very little of the language and/or culture, and trying to determine where the “bad guys” are hiding. Conversely, once members of terrorist organizations are located, action against them must be rapid and decisive, as individuals present rather fleeting targets.

RDO therefore promises to have a fairly limited applicability in attacking terrorist networks. While attacks against terrorists must be rapid and decisive, they must also be surgical and usually covert. These last two aspects are not characteristics of rapid, decisive operations. RDO is a concept that governs operations by general-purpose forces, while the War on Terror—in the strictest sense—is the province of a small subset of the special operations community.

RDO therefore does not—and cannot be expected to—specifically address the Bush Doctrine’s focus on terrorist networks and groups.

RDO v. Weak States

RDO can also be assessed against its utility in action against weak states that harbor terrorist groups. The Bush Doctrine essentially charges the military to be prepared to conduct operations against weak states, with Afghanistan being perhaps the clearest example of such to date. The four aspects of RDO will then be examined with reference to such an engagement.

First, can the effects-based nature of RDO be applied to weak states? The answer on this question would seem to be mixed. On the one hand, a weak state will tend to resemble a simple, as opposed to a complex system. As a simple system, it may lack critical nodes to attack. In this sense, the minimal infrastructure of a weak state may serve as a type of protection against asymmetric attack. After all, a weak state is a weak state because it lacks the command, control and resources to exercise sovereignty over all its claimed territory.³¹ It should therefore not be surprising that an effects-based system might have difficulty attacking such a system.

But on the other hand, even the weakest of weak states will probably have invested in some Western-style infrastructure. And in grafting this technology onto their simple system, if the weak state comes to rely on this new equipment, a weak state may create a vulnerability that EBO could effectively target. So, ironically, a weak state that is trying to establish some modicum of modern political technique may be more vulnerable, at least to this method, than a weak state that proudly refuses to compromise with modernity. Therefore, the utility of EBO will be mixed, though the default must be to assume that it will be of little to no utility.

³¹ In fact, most weak states will not be territorially-based at all, but will instead be tribal, clan, or family-based governments that pretend to control territory in order to gain the international benefits of claiming nation-state status. On the distinction between territorial and patriarchal (or tribal) systems, see Orestes Brownson, The American Republic: Its Constitution, Tendencies and Destiny (Wilmington, Delaware: ISI Books, 2003), pp. 21-22, 45-47.

We might then ask how vulnerable a weak state will be to asymmetric attacks. The answer would seem to be that, not unlike a terrorist network, any aspect of general-purpose American military power more sophisticated than a light infantry unit will be asymmetrical to the forces assembled by a weak state. We would expect that a weak state would be unable to effectively counter either American mechanized and armor forces or American airpower, let alone more sophisticated versions of American power. Therefore, attempts to further employ asymmetric means would be at the least redundant, if not counterproductive.

Next, how might “cybershock” affect a weak state? Again, as discussed under the auspices of EBO, this concept also assumes that one’s opponent is a complex system. The metaphor of “attacking the nervous system” utilized by cybershock theorists assumes that the organism has evolved enough to have a nervous system. It is not entirely clear that a weak state will, in fact, be this sophisticated. And in this case, cybershock may be difficult to achieve unless, again, as earlier discussed, the beginnings of modernization have created particularly vulnerabilities for the weak state. But in general, it will be difficult to impose chaos on a system that is already chaotic, at least from the standpoint of the central government.

Finally, how will the rapid tempo, achieved through minimal mass, play in a weak state. Unfortunately, this may be one of the real vulnerabilities of the doctrine when applied to a weak state. The minimal mass anticipated by RDO may find itself vulnerable to the decentralized, chaotic threats found in a weak state. RDO theory counts on cybershock to isolate dispersed units from the command and control, thereby paralyzing them and preventing them from engaging American ground forces. However, there may be armed forces (or armed groups) present in the weak state that have local, rather than national, loyalties. If these local or private armies are led by strong commanders, these forces may be invulnerable to effects and shock. So long as these forces remain dispersed and do not present a detectable and targetable mass to American systems, the RDO force may find itself presented with an asymmetric threat. In this particular sense, a force attempting to execute a Rapid Decisive Operation against a weak state may find it has

created its own critical vulnerability.³² The inherent weaknesses of a small force cannot be ignored in any assessment of the use of RDO. The weak state presents a uniquely asymmetric threat to this small force, which the usual counters of superior C4I and airpower may be unable to impact.

RDO v. Rogue States

Finally, the Bush Doctrine also calls—and perhaps primarily calls—for the US Military to be prepared to engage Rogue States that sponsor terrorist groups, provide sanctuary, and—most critically—may have the resources to produce Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) that can be either used by the Rogue State, or provided to terrorist networks. It is against these states, such as Iraq, that the Bush Doctrine takes its firmest and most novel stance.

So how well do the four aspects of RDO promise to work against rogue states? Unlike in earlier comparisons, EBO may have great utility in this environment. It is against rogue states that EBO shows its greatest promise. The rogue state, in order to maintain control of its populace, will have a sophisticated command and control system, as well as economic and transportation infrastructure. In short, it is difficult to think of an example of a rogue state that does not meet the threshold to be considered a complex system, against which one can attempt to create effects. As this monograph has moved up the spectrum from terrorists through weak states to rogue states, it has finally reached a level where EBO begins to “come into its own.”

Similarly, the modern infrastructure of the rogue state also makes it possible to maximize American technological advantages to attack in an asymmetric manner. The attempt of the rogue state to become modern means that there is probably a relatively efficient command and control

³² “Critical vulnerability” is used here in accordance with the definition of Dr. Joe Strange in Centers of Gravity & Critical Vulnerabilities: Building on the Clausewitzian Foundation So That We Can All Speak the Same Language (Perspectives on Warfighting Number Four, Second Edition, Marine Corps University, 1996), p. 43: “Critical requirements or COMPONENTS THEREOF which are deficient, or vulnerable to neutralization, interdiction or attack (moral/physical harm) in a manner achieving decisive results—the smaller the resources and effort applied and the smaller the risk and cost, the better” (emphasis in original).

network in place linked to the supporting technology, but it will not be an excessively robust network. There will likely be multiple nodes that, if attacked, will prove to be “single points of failure.” Since the rogue state, in modernizing, will have attempted to create itself in the image of the Western democracies, it will be relatively easy for analysts to “mirror” potential vulnerabilities onto this enemy, and utilize Western technology against Western technology in an asymmetric manner.

This same infrastructure then permits the use of a cybershock-based strategy. The existence of Western infrastructure will almost certainly have created a dependence of Western infrastructure, meaning that the removal of infrastructure will disrupt, perhaps decisively, the command and control of the enemy system. As all states currently defined as “rogue” have at least some semblance of a Western (or former Soviet) army, the command system required by this army makes cybershock a viable strategy.

Finally, RDO calls for speed, made possible by smaller mass. It is in the rogue state that this particular tenet seems most questionable. The rogue state will have, as earlier stated, a large conventional army. Even if this army is asymmetrically attacked and disrupted via cybershock, there will still be a not inconsiderable mass of enemy units and equipment on the battlefield. A smaller force will be more vulnerable against these remnants in a close-in fight. In short, we are faced with a paradoxical truth. The smaller, more agile force is probably well-protected during the period when the rogue state has command and control over its military formations. So long as the military is centrally controlled, American information superiority will likely provide protection to the smaller American force. However, once the enemy has been “shocked and awed” through an asymmetric attack producing cybershock, the remnants of this force may well exhibit unpredictable behaviors, making them a much more dangerous threat to a smaller force, now bereft of its information protection. A small American force, facing self-organizing enemy remnants in the intelligence “dead space,” may, in fact, be utterly antithetical to the effect desired

by RDO. Again, it is paramount that in attempting to create an asymmetrical advantage against an opponent, the American forces do not inadvertently create their own critical vulnerability.

In conclusion then, RDO shows variable success against the three types of conflict envisioned under the Bush Doctrine. Terrorist networks appear to be relatively immune to RDO, as the networks are simply too fleeting, and must be fought as they appear. While certain isolated aspects of the RDO paradigm may be helpful in the war against the terrorist networks, the entire theory seems lacking—perhaps not surprisingly, as these targets are well outside its design parameters.

With regard to weak states, RDO shows some potential, though the lack of modern infrastructure may diminish the desired effects. RDO here shows that is designed for, if not a peer competitor in the fullest sense, then at least a state that is attempting to be some type of peer competitor. Further, since the implementation of the Bush Doctrine remains a priority, it may be important to reflect upon who or what might fill a power vacuum once the current regime is displaced. The RDO force will likely be unable to decisively influence social questions such as succession, which may take on new importance under the Bush Doctrine.

And finally, RDO should topple rogue states in relatively short order. However, undestroyed remnants of the armed forces may present an asymmetric threat of their own to the small mass of friendly troops envisioned under RDO.

Post-Conflict Governance

Finally, in addition to the four criteria as distilled from the RDO Whitepaper, one other external factor must be used in assessing the efficacy of RDO with regard to the Bush Doctrine—that of setting conditions conducive to an effect post-conflict reconstruction. As Nadia Schadlow has convincingly argued, post-conflict governance operations (though Schadlow would eschew the qualifier “post-conflict,” as it implies that military governance does not begin until conflict

ends) are neither a postwar problem, nor a non-military task. Instead, “the establishment of political and economic order [is] *a part of war itself*.³³

Now clearly, this criterion is not relevant to terror networks. It is not in the national interest to reconstruct a terrorist network, to try to make it more humane, or to harness it for other purposes. Terrorist networks exist, from a U.S. standpoint, to be destroyed. However, with respect to states, it is at least implicit in the Bush Doctrine that after an incompetent or hostile regime is removed in a weak or rogue state, a new political order must then be established. If U.S. forces were simply to withdraw after conducting a Rapid, Decisive Operation, it seems likely that an unfriendly regime would then establish itself in the aftermath, creating yet another weak and/or rogue state opposed to U.S. interests.

It is perhaps a perennial temptation for U.S. military planners to assume that post-conflict operations are a civilian function, in which the military plays merely a supporting role, or a post-war “tasking” to be handed off as a supporting effort to (largely reserve component) civil affairs units. As Schadlow herself notes, “The Army has never relished the tasks associated with governance.”³⁴ If military governance could truly be avoided, then perhaps an assessment of RDO as an operational concept could avoid using post-conflict issues as a measure of evaluation. However, this is clearly not the case, and this evaluation cannot be avoided.³⁵

While postwar governance is, again, clearly not a valid criterion when assessing conflict against terrorist groups, the effects of RDO on weak and rogue states for postconflict governance can be addressed simultaneously. As earlier noted, several of the tenets of RDO—EBO, cybershock, speed through lighter mass—will be minimally effective in a weak state, and will

³³ Schadlow, “War and the Art of Governance,” p. 85. Emphasis in original.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 90.

³⁵ The authors of the RDO Whitepaper do not seem to concur with this assessment. They state that RDO consists of “two interrelated phases.” The first is an attempt to “influence and deter,” then “if deterrence fails, RDO transitions to a second phase in which we rapidly and decisively coerce or, on order from the President, compel or defeat the enemy.” RDO Whitepaper, p. ix. There is then no mention of the political aftermath, the consolidation of war gains, or the achievement of political ends.

become more effective in a rogue state, in direct proportion to the modernization the state has effected, both in terms of infrastructure and centralized command and control. However, several of these tenets have the potential to cause negative second- and third-order effects when considered from the perspective of postwar governance.

For example, the theory of “cybershock” seeks to “cause paralysis by attacking the enemy’s nervous system.”³⁶ But in both weak and rogue states, the enemy military nervous system will almost certainly be at least intertwined with, if not identical to, the civilian nervous system (such as it is). Therefore, disrupting the military command and control system will almost certainly cause the degradation, if not the collapse, of civilian systems such as power, police, and sanitation. If the postconflict governance task is taken seriously, this may change the decision-making calculus and the decision to disrupt enemy command and control.

Similar, EBO attempts to utilize a first-order physical effect in order to create second- and third-order psychological and social effects. Again, when the impacts of these effects on postconflict governance tasks are taken into consideration, the cost-benefit analysis of these effects may be called into question. It may, in fact, be counterproductive in the long term to attack certain enemy systems.

Governance and Intelligence

Finally, the requirements of postconflict governance may utterly negate the theoretical hope that RDO may permit (or even demand) the deployment of fewer and smaller ground units. While decisive American advantages in C4ISR may diminish the necessity for large ground formations to apply combat power against enemy forces in certain instances, these same C4ISR superiorities may be of little to no use in governance tasks. It is now a commonplace that while American forces possess overwhelming superiorities in Signal and Electronic Intelligence

³⁶ Schneider, “A New Form of Warfare,” p. 60.

(SIGINT and ELINT), largely due to our utter dominance of Space, the United States defense establishment has a glaring weakness in Human Intelligence (HUMINT), despite superhuman efforts to plug the hole. In the governance phase of an operation against a weak or rogue state, signals and electronics may be of little to no use. In many ways, the entire U.S. intelligence establishment is a Cold War legacy, optimized to gather intelligence on large formations and to eavesdrop on sophisticated military communications systems. However, as one wag put it, we have no satellite capable of detecting “apathy, frustration, or fanaticism,” nor lone individuals planting bombs or sniping. Further, our inadequacies will be magnified in relation to likely enemy strengths. The governance phase will require interaction with the civilian population of the former weak or rogue state, placing us in the center of a potential, if not actualized, enemy HUMINT network.³⁷

When governance operations are given their proper due, the optimal balance of forces committed to a conflict may need to change entirely. Just as military planners have come to accept that theater logistics units are the priority of effort in the early phases of a conflict, it may be that military (and political) planners must come to accept that large ground units—Infantry, Military Police, Engineers and Civil Affairs—are required to secure the gains made possible by our C4ISR superiority.

Therefore, it appears that a proper emphasis on post-conflict governance brings to light a weakness in the RDO concept with respect to implementation of the Bush Doctrine. The detrimental effects that an EBO and cybershock campaign might have on national reconstruction and a political settlement could potentially pose serious difficulties. In addition, the requirement to garrison the former weak or rogue state, in at least some minimal fashion, may require a much

³⁷ See, e.g. Tom Shanker, “U.S. is Worried Foe is Tracking Targets in Iraq,” New York Times, November 29, 2003. Accessed online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/11/29/international/middleeast/29INTE.html>.

larger troop presence, and by implication a correspondingly larger logistical footprint, then the RDO concept seems to anticipate. This disconnect should give the concept designers pause.

Conclusion

It appears that the less-than-perfect match between the self-described tenets of RDO and the requirements of the Bush Doctrine with regard to terrorist networks, weak states, and rogue states, as discussed in this chapter, implies that the RDO concept may have serious shortfalls as an operational concept for the immediate future. Therefore the following chapter will suggest alternative means that Joint Forces Command might wish to consider.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

Since this monograph claims to have discovered serious shortcomings in the RDO concept with respect to the strategic ends of the Bush Doctrine, it is incumbent upon the author to offer recommendations. These recommendations will focus on how US forces might better implement the Bush Doctrine. However, they will also address potential scenarios in which the utilization of forces under a Rapid Decisive Operations paradigm might be appropriate.

Rapid Decisive Operations and the Future Strategic Environment

Rapid Decisive Operations is not a flawed concept in and of itself. What this monograph has sought to demonstrate is that a concept designed from certain 1990s-era conceptions of the future is not the panacea it was once thought to be. But this does not mean that the concept does not and will not have utility in warfighting scenarios that closely mirror those for which it was optimized. The RDO Whitepaper itself admits that the RDO concept was tested in “initial experiments...designed to focus on high-end, smaller-scale contingencies (SSC) with the potential for escalation as the combination of the most likely and dangerous of the possibilities confronting us.”³⁸

RDO retains great promise when wargamed against the strategic scenarios for which it appears to have been designed and optimized. For example, in the scenarios that have driven military training for the past 15 years, in which a “rogue state” (or, in days past, a Soviet client state) invades a state friendly to or allied with the United States.³⁹ In these scenarios, the end state is almost always the “re-establishment of the international border.” There is no requirement to remove the hostile government from power, and therefore EBO and cybershock tactics can be

³⁸ RDO Whitepaper, p. 1.

³⁹ The Atlantics/Cortinian JRTC scenario fits this model, as does the CGSC scenario involving an invasion of Azerbaijan by a mythical nation of “Azerbailan.”

used without reservations. Further in such a scenario, there is no requirement for the United States to take on any postwar governance tasks, as the friendly state remains intact, while the hostile state is still in power, having been merely had its territorial ambitions thwarted.

A variation of this scenario is the often-wargamed invasion of South Korea by the North Korean People's Army. In this scenario, while regime change would almost certainly be a task, the South Korean Army and other South Korean public and private agencies would take the bulk of the responsibility for the reconstruction efforts. This scenario has a minimal post-conflict requirement for the U.S. commander and his planners to consider.

It would therefore be helpful were JFCOM to acknowledge the origins of the RDO concept in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War. A logical conclusion that would be derived from this admission is that the RDO paradigm may lose its utility as strategic applications move further and further away from the original model. RDO promises to be a wonderful concept for repelling an industrialized Army from the territory of a neighboring state. Beyond this specific contingency, this monograph has shown that this “Joint Warfighting Concept” begins to lose its utility.

Terrorist Networks

Due to the inherently underground nature of terrorist networks, and their correspondingly fleeting exposure time, it is not clear that RDO is either useful or necessary in the fight against these groups. Terrorist networks will continue to be difficult to engage with conventional military power. When terrorist cells, training camps, or operatives surface, they will need to be engaged in a rapid and decisive manner, but it is not clear that a concept more sophisticated than a “strategic raid,” whether by airpower, SOF, or conventional forces, will be necessary. But the bulk of the terrorist network—its financing, recruitment, indoctrination—will doubtless remain hidden among the populace of various countries, and will remain invulnerable to military power, though not to police and intelligence agencies.

This admitted difficulty in targeting and attacking terrorists does not obviate the need for JFCOM to formulate a joint concept for attacking terrorist camps and groups when they can be identified. However, it is less than clear that RDO fits this bill.

Instead, this monograph recommends that JFCOM articulate a Joint Military Concept specifically tailored for attacks against terrorist groups and infrastructure (such as it is). This promises to be a more difficult task, as the joint commander may well be a supporting effort, or even conceivably a force provider. But an acknowledgement of this new strategic reality will be necessary if American military power is to be effectively used against terrorist networks.

Problems of Cybershock and EBO

As detailed in Chapter Four, the logic of RDO runs through using Effects-Based Operations to induce “cybershock” in the opposing enemy force. As James Schneider freely concedes, cybershock, or “cybernetic paralysis drives an organized system into disorganization by destroying the coherence, connection, and flow of information among the component parts of a complex system.”⁴⁰ While this breakdown of coherence and connection is of great utility in causing paralysis within the military force, it creates a difficulty. This military breakdown also promises to paralyze much of the civilian infrastructure of a weak or rogue state. When this paralysis affects vital services—such as power, water, police, prisons—post-conflict reconstruction and governance much more difficult than it might otherwise be.

An example of this difficulty may be seen in the widespread sexual violence and rape that has been documented in post-OIF Iraq. It now appears that just prior to the American invasion, the Hussein regime released numerous violent criminals from his prison system. This was followed by the breakdown of public order following the American taking of Baghdad. It is now

⁴⁰ Schneider, “A New Form of Warfare,” p. 60.

widely acknowledged that sexual crimes against women are commonplace in much of Iraq, as a functioning police and legal order has yet to be restored.⁴¹ Needless to say, this greatly complicates the reconstruction effort, both directly, as the victims and those who fear becoming victims fail to participate in civil society, and indirectly, as the relatives of these women harbor understandable, if misplaced, hostility towards an American invasion of which these assaults are a regrettable side effect.

In short, when a cybershock-style attack disrupts public order, it increases the chaos in various public systems, likely rendering them inert. If key systems for health and security cannot be rapidly restored, American forces can expect to encounter hostility, as they have brought about a condition that is, however temporarily, even more intolerable than was the preceding regime. Under these conditions, the Hobbesian thesis—that any form of government is better than an anarchic state of nature—is likely to become attractive, empowering those ruthless and brutal enough to impose order.

A Joint Warfighting concept that keeps the strategic ends of the Bush Doctrine at the forefront might then need to rethink the utility of cybershock. If the military systems of a rogue state can be isolated from the utilities and public safety systems, then there is no difficulty. However, those who propose using EBO to achieve cybershock must be willing to acknowledge—under their own assumptions—that the second and third order effects of an action may not always be favorable to U.S. interests. This monograph maintains that disrupting civilian infrastructure is an unfavorable effect, again, given the ends of the Bush Doctrine.

Security

Similarly, there may be negative externalities even in utilizing a strategy of cybershock against military forces. Granted, cybershock will likely leave the forces incapable of coordinated,

⁴¹ Human Rights Watch, "Climate of Fear: Sexual Violence and Abduction of Women and Girls in Baghdad," July 2003.

concerted action. However, the disorganized forces left without guidance by a cybershock attack may still present a significant danger—particularly to the lighter, smaller force envisioned in RDO. Even taking into account the almost certain degradation of enemy forces by precision-guided munitions (PGMs), a determined enemy may be able to collect remaining combat systems in order to engage American ground forces. We must assume that enemy systems will also be adaptive. This remnant force may deliberately target “softer” targets, such as command and control and logistics units, in an attempt to inflict casualties and create vulnerabilities in the combat forces.

In addition to the dangers presented to a smaller combat force, very real questions exist as to the sufficiency of a small ground force, given the requirements of post-conflict governance. When it comes to imposing order, there is no substitute for “boots on the ground,” as related experiments in American police techniques should have taught us. The “Broken Windows” theory of policing maintains that any appearance of disorder spawns more disorder. Therefore, the aftermath of a conflict, with the inevitable collateral damage to civilian infrastructure, while require an inordinate security presence to check the social tendency towards lawlessness in a damaged environment. In short, the “broken windows” created by American military action must be quickly repaired—and the damaged area (likely a very large area) secured in the interim—if the lawless atmosphere which is the Bush Doctrine’s *delenda est* is to be minimized and eventually tamed.⁴²

There will then be an immediate need to impose order at the very moment that the enemy force is no longer able to provide it—if an American force permits a “security gap” to emerge,

⁴² On “Broken Windows,” see James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling, “Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety,” The Atlantic Monthly (March 1982), pp. 29-38. Accessed online at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/crime/windows.htm>. See also George L. Kelling and Catherine M. Coles, Fixing Broken Windows (New York: The Free Press, 1996), p. 247-8 on how “order maintenance protects ‘good kids’ and controls ‘wannabees’.” The applicability to “wannabee” Islamic terrorists should be apparent.

various criminal and former military elements will be certain to fill it.⁴³ While the network-centric, effects-based systems of RDO may be able to assist in controlling the post-conflict environment, both the immediate aftermath of OIF and the Kelling and Wilson policing theories indicate that only physical presence of dismounted soldiers can be expected to have a significant effect.

This monograph recommends that Joint Forces Command pursue a Joint Warfighting Concept that acknowledges the complications that disrupting command and control can create for postwar governance. The Bush Doctrine makes it clear that American soldiers can no longer expect to return immediately home at the end of hostilities. Therefore, planners may wish to weigh the trade-offs of a concept that is rapid and decisive in the combat phase, but is unable to rapidly transition into the post-conflict governance phase. It may be more prudent to attempt to design a concept that focuses on setting the best possible conditions for post-conflict governance. Such a concept may require giving up some of the tenets of RDO. It may need to preserve enemy command and control systems. It may not be able to resolve the conflict phase quite as quickly. And, most controversially, it may require a much larger troop presence, whose purpose will be to impose order by force as terrain is first seized, then secured.

This new Joint Warfighting Concept would seek to merge the very real American advantages in C4ISR with a large, well-protected body of troops, capable of not only fighting off, but also destroying any conventional or unconventional attacker. This concept would be built around the forces able to provide the capabilities required for postconflict governance, such as engineers, military police (or infantry cross-trained as such) and civil affairs officers (perhaps

⁴³ For example, a recent AP report claims that:

"American military commanders did not impose curfews, halt looting or order Iraqis back to work after Saddam Hussein's regime fell because policy-makers were reluctant to declare U.S. troops an occupying force, according to an internal Army review examined by the Associated Press. As a result, the Bush administration's first steps at reconstruction in Iraq were severely hampered, creating a power vacuum that others quickly moved to fill and a growing mistrust on the part of ordinary Iraqis, the report said." John J. Lumpkin and Dafna Linzaer, AP, "Army Says Policy Choice Led to Chaos in Iraq," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 28, 2003. Accessed online at: <http://ebird.afis.osd.mil/cgi-bin/ebird/displaydata.pl?Requested=/ebfiles/e20031128237006.html>.

dual-hatted from another combat branch—field artillery units do seem to be largely unemployed *qua* field artillery units in the governance phase).

Intelligence

As noted in Chapter Three, a Rapid Decisive Operation is knowledge-centric. Unfortunately, future battles fought under the Bush Doctrine promise to be in venues that are not receptive to American strengths in ISR. These enemies, particularly in the governance stage of the campaign, will be dispersed, networked, and reliant on the civilian population. The American defense establishment is not positioned to support these operations with timely, focused intelligence.

Unfortunately, any fix to this problem may encounter two major issues in American strategic culture. The first is an unwillingness to acknowledge the necessity for cultural studies. Americans are a notoriously inward looking culture. This exhibits itself in American's notorious neglect of foreign languages, let alone foreign cultures, as well as a lack of curiosity about the same. While this was perhaps no vice when the two oceans protected American interests, it is no longer a viable strategy in an increasingly interconnected world. However, Americans are clearly not prepared with the proper skill set for this new world. One commentator goes so far as to maintain that the root cause is "a tragic flaw in the American character rather than preventable negligence."⁴⁴

However, this inherent American vulnerability is made even more acute by the second trend, a naïve and willful belief in the power of technology to compensate for any other weaknesses that might exist. In this view, advances in C4ISR technology have enabled American commanders and policy-makers to "lift the fog of war."⁴⁵ Yet, as documented earlier, Americans

⁴⁴ See Spengler, "Why American is Losing the Intelligence War," Asia Times Online, Nov 11, 2003. Accessed at: http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/EK11Ak01.html.

⁴⁵ The *locus classicus* of this view can be found in Bill Owens with Ed Offley, Lifting the Fog of War (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

involved in the implementation of the Bush Doctrine are discovering that not only has the fog of war not been lifted, but that the battlefield is more obscured than ever before, with American technology seemingly impotent against their adversaries.

This vulnerability could have been foreseen. Authors such as the late Adda Bozeman wrote at great lengths about the importance of culture and the limitation of technology in the post-Cold War world. As Bozeman gently instructs us, the data necessary to win in cross-cultural conflict is:

...not easily stored in data banks as these are now constructed. For just how does one quantify pride, prestige, prejudice, moral outrage, insistence on survival, vanity and vengeance? What does one do with killing in obedience to spirits of the earth or living ancestors? Where in the theoretician's charts and models is there a place for hatred of the enemy or love of country? Are tools available for a rigorous analysis of self-discipline, cowardice, disaffection, or daring? And what are the criteria for an objective, transnational comparison of human inclinations or capacities to inflict violence and sustain war-induced uncertainty, suffering, and death? If we have no answers to questions such as these, should we then assume that the meanings of war carried in the minds of the Sudanese and the Bengalis, the Israelis and the Kurds, the Arabs and the Poles, the Hutu and the Greeks are one and the same?⁴⁶

The intelligence systems so prized by the advocates of the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) may then be more reactionary—built on Cold War assumptions of Western-style war—than revolutionary. The Cold War—paradoxically—provided a great deal of certainty regarding the type of war and enemy against which to prepare and wargame. This enemy was then relatively predictable, or at least predictable enough to know what to look for, and therefore what ISR systems must be designed. With the end of the Cold War, we have returned to a world of Clausewitzian uncertainty.⁴⁷ There are important facts necessary for a comprehensive intelligence analysis that cannot be acquired by viewing or intercepting. Therefore, we are left

⁴⁶ Adda Bozeman "War and the Clash of Ideas" in Strategic Intelligence & Statecraft: Selected Essays (Washington: Brassey's (US) Inc., 1992), p. 52.

⁴⁷ "[S]trategists, in order to confer on their theory an apparent scientificity, have neglected one of the characteristics of real war, the *uncertainty* of the relation of forces, over the intentions of the adversary." Raymond Aron, Clausewitz: The Philosopher of War, trans. Christine Booker and Norman Stone (New York: Touchstone, 1983), p. 118 (emphasis added).

not only with a certain irreducible uncertainty, but also an uncertainty that is potentially reducible, but for which we lack the means.

The recommendation implicit in this conclusion is two-fold. First, the JFCOM writers must reassess the assumption that contemporary intelligence systems will be able to “lift the fog of war” and provide near-perfect information to the maneuver commander.⁴⁸ This “irrational exuberance” smacks of a utopian mindset, in which we find “a reckless heaping-up and insatiable gathering in, an unbounded *cumulation* of advantages, with the counterpart of balancing and circumscribing drawbacks shuttled out, extruded from the field of consciousness.”⁴⁹ In this technological utopianism that presents the greatest challenge to a clear doctrinal vision, as fantastic visions of technologically conjured information dominance prevent a prudential assessment of likely threats and counters.

The primary operational concept for the U.S. Armed Forces must be underwritten by realistic expectations. A modest proposal that might help impose such realism would be the division of labor between the generation and development of a warfighting concept and the testing and validation of that same concept.⁵⁰ JFCOM J9 currently maintains both of these responsibilities, and the possibility for inadvertent or willful self-deception cannot be underestimated.

Second, the entire defense establishment must re-look what is required to gather useful intelligence from the strategic to the tactical level in the post-Cold War era. While no one is proposing discarding the entire space-based surveillance system, it is long past time to recognize the limitations of such a system, and develop alternative sources of information. To put it mildly,

⁴⁸ See H.R. McMaster, “Crack in the Foundation: Defense Transformation and the Underlying Assumption of Dominant Knowledge in Future War,” U.S. Army Center for Strategic Leadership Student Issue Paper, November 2003.

⁴⁹ Aurel Kolnai, “The Utopian Mind” in Priviledge and Liberty and Other Essays in Political Philosophy, ed. Daniel J. Mahoney (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 1999), p. 125.

⁵⁰ This conflict of interest is first noted, and the need for division first proposed, in McMaster “Crack in the Foundation,” pp. 80-81.

a satellite cannot recognize apathy, fanaticism, or frustration. Yet implementation of the Bush Doctrine will require the U.S. military to work in close proximity to civilian populations, the disposition of which will be a critical intelligence requirement.

Summary

This paper has concluded that while Rapid Decisive Operations does have some limited utility in implementing the Bush Doctrine, the significant limitations imply that an alternative warfighting concept may be required. While recognizing the many useful features of Rapid Decisive Operations, this alternative concept would maintain its focus on the political end state that is the Bush Doctrine's charge to the U.S. military. At the end of the day, terrorist networks are to be defeated, while the weak and rogue states that provide the terrorists sanctuary and resources are to be reformed. A clearly implied task, and a mission essential one at that, is the establishment of a friendly, decent, and constitutional (though not necessarily democratic) government that is capable of (and willing to) policing its own territory.

Too many have confused the Bush Doctrine's mandate for regime change with the mere requirement of regime removal. Unfortunately, these terms are not synonymous. Regime change involves the installation of a legitimate, stable government, and one capable of controlling its territory (else we risk yet another weak state). Excepting the rarest of cases, the new regime will not emerge spontaneously, but will instead require assistance from the United States—primarily her Army.

The task of regime change—and not simply regime overthrow—will require a decisive change in mindset for the joint forces of the United States. For too long, the American military mindset has been shaped by the unique circumstances of the Second World War and the Cold War, circumstances that required absolute political capitulation. Raymond Aron cautioned against this mindset, noting that, “when the struggle is joined, there is a danger that military

victory in itself will become the goal, causing political objectives to be forgotten.”⁵¹ The Bush Doctrine calls the nation back to this political understanding of warfare.

A new operational concept must put the Clausewitzian mandate of war ends at the forefront of military policy. It may, (indeed, it will likely) require that the disposition of forces during the combat phase of an operation be driven by the required endstate of those forces for post-conflict missions. It will require a re-examination of American intelligence capabilities, as we discover that the systems that would “lift the fog of war” are instead impotent to gather the necessary information required to implement regime change. And finally, it will require that the U.S. armed forces, and the Army in particular, embrace post-conflict governance and reconstruction as a warfighting task.⁵² Rapid Decisive Operations, as currently defined, takes us further away from this fundamental political reality by refusing to recognize the warfighting task of reconstruction.

Incorporating the Bush Doctrine, and its implicit requirement for postwar governance, into a joint warfighting concept will require intellectual “heavy lifting.” Further, as the fundamental strategic reorientation required by both the end of the Cold War and the inauguration of the Bush Doctrine becomes more apparent, it may be necessary to relook assumptions that have become commonplace over the past decade. We have only to look at the disastrous effects of our 1950s “transformation” into the Pentomic Army to realize the very real dangers of reorganizing and re-equipping a force based on faulty assumptions.⁵³ It is incumbent upon

⁵¹ Raymond Aron, Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations, trans. Richard Howard and Annette Baker Fox (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1966), p. 73.

⁵² This understanding of post-conflict governance as a warfighting task may distinguish my position slightly from that of LTC John M. Metz. Metz poses the question as one of “what should the Army do after it wins the nation’s wars?” In contrast, I maintain that the war is not won until the political endstate has been reached, irrespective of the results—even decisive results—in the combat phase. The distinction is more that semantic, as defining post-conflict operations outside of the Army’s core warfighting competency makes it tempting to attempt to place these tasks on another agency. See LTC John M. Metz, “To Fight and Win America’s Wars...and Then What?” M.M.A.S. Monograph, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2003.

⁵³ See A.J. Bacevich, The Pentomic Era: The U.S. Army Between Korea and Vietnam (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1986).

current military leaders, and the designers of our Joint Warfighting Concept in particular, to ensure that we do not again fall into similar errors.

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SAMS MONOGRAPH PROSPECTUS

SUBMITTED BY: MAJ Douglas A. Ollivant **DATE:** 7 Oct 2003

SEMINAR: Seminar 5 **MONOGRAPH DIRECTOR:** Dr. James Schneider

WORKING TITLE: Rapid, Decisive, or Effective? An assessment of the suitability of Rapid Decisive Operations to implement the Bush Doctrine.

- 1. RESEARCH QUESTION:** Is the transformation concept known a “Rapid Decisive Operations” (hereafter RDO) the proper operational method to achieve the strategic ends outlined in the Bush Doctrine?
- 2. PROBLEM BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE:** As the Army moves down the road to “transformation,” Rapid Decisive Operations has taken center stage as the privileged model. Joint Forces Command has produced several versions of its “White Paper” on RDO, which is described as the “overarching operational concept” in support of joint warfighting.

Yet as JFCOM has worked its various models for RDO, the world has changed. The original RDO White Paper predates 9-11 by almost two years, implying that RDO has its roots in a strategic framework that may not reflect the current political aim of the administration.

In short, this monograph asks a Clausewitzian question. As it seeks to transform for the future, is the U.S. Army being guided by executive policy, or is it using an exclusively military logic, autonomous of the political branches?

- 3. Methodology:** This monograph uses a very simple methodology. It will compare the stated tenets of Rapid Decisive Operations with the policy goals of the Bush Doctrine.

Rapid Decisive Operations:

- Integrates knowledge, C2, and operations to achieve pol/mil objectives
- Leverages power to understand and reduce enemy capabilities and coherence
- Asymmetric engagements dictate terms and tempo
- Loss of capabilities and coherence forces enemy to cease action

Bush Doctrine

Neutralize, through preemptive means, if necessary, Three Threats:

- terrorist organizations with global reach
- weak states that harbor and assist such terrorist organizations
- rogue states

This monograph will remain agnostic on prudential, legal, and ethical questions regarding the Bush Doctrine itself.

I am sure Dr. Rice will have a sigh of relief and return to her duties with a lighter heart.

4. Criteria:

- 1. Effectiveness of RDO against terrorist organizations:** Does RDO provide a useful framework for engaging and eliminating terrorist organizations

2. **Effectiveness of RDO against weak states:** Does RDO provide a useful framework for engaging and eliminating or transforming weak states?
3. **Effectiveness of RDO against rogue states:** Does RDO provide a useful framework for engaging and eliminating or transforming rogue states?

Again, the purpose of this monograph is to determine if RDO provides an effective means to implement the policy goals of the Bush Doctrine.

4. MILESTONES:

11 Sep 03 Literature Review Due; 9 Oct 03 Prospectus Due; 15 Oct Outline Due; 26 Nov 03 Draft Chapters 1 & 2 Due; 17 Dec 03 Draft Chapters 3 & 4 Due; 5 Jan 04 Draft Conclusions and Recommendations Chapter; 8 Apr 04, Final Draft Due.

5. STRUCTURE: (Draft)

Chapter One: Introduction

- Problem Statement
- Purpose of Study and Background
 - Transformation Overview
 - Post 9-11 security environment
 - Danger of misguided doctrine
- Scope and Limitations
 - Does not question Bush Doctrine
 - Does not addresses Effects-Based Operations (EBO) or Network-Centric Warfare (NCW), save to note that they are intertwined with RDO
- Significance of the Study
- Methodology of the Study

Chapter Two: Define the Bush Doctrine: This chapter will lay out the principles of the Bush Doctrine as initially defined in his West Point address, codified in the National Security Strategy, and as executed in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF).

Chapter Three: Define Rapid Decisive Operations. This chapter will define Rapid Decisive Operations as laid out in JFCOM RDO Whitepaper Ver 2.0.

Chapter Four: Compare and Contrast the requirements of the Bush Doctrine with the capabilities of Rapid Decisive Operations.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations. Both positive and negative.

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